

**GOVERNANCE BULLETIN 2**

**DEPARTMENT FOR THE ECONOMY  
WHISTLEBLOWING GUIDANCE  
FOR STAKEHOLDERS EXTERNAL TO THE DEPARTMENT**

**JUNE 2016**

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## 1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This document provides guidance for members of the public and other external stakeholders who wish to make a public interest ('whistleblowing') disclosure to the Department for the Economy.
- 1.2 This guidance does not deal with complaints about the Department's processes, performance or standards of service, for which separate procedures exist [DfE Complaints Procedure](#).
- 1.3 The Department is keen to be advised if you believe you have information in relation to any of the following issues which are occurring within the Department, its Arms Length Bodies, or any of its principal contracted suppliers:
- Unlawful conduct;
  - Abuse of public funds;
  - Potential fraud;
  - Threat to health and safety; and
  - Damage to the environment.
- 1.6 Any serious allegations or concerns raised externally by the public will be treated, where possible, in the same manner as 'whistleblowing' allegations made by staff and with the strictest confidence. However, if your allegations lead to criminal proceedings there may be an expectation that you, as a complainant, will give evidence in a court of law.
- 1.7 The Department takes all allegations of fraud and corruption very seriously and will ensure that any reports of such activity are fully investigated and appropriate action taken. If you have any such concerns it is important that you act quickly to report these, providing as much information or evidence to support your allegations.

1.8 If a 'whistleblowing' allegation is made to an Arms Length Body or to a principally contracted supplier by a member of the public or an external stakeholder, the Arms Length Body or principally contracted supplier is required to notify the Department of the nature and extent of the allegations made.

## **2.0 HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN**

2.1 If you become aware of wrongdoing, malpractice, fraud or corruption, you can make a disclosure by contacting Corporate Planning, Governance and Equality Branch within the Department; email: [Corporate.Governance@economy-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Corporate.Governance@economy-ni.gov.uk) or telephone: 028 9025 7611.

2.2 Once you have told us of your concern, the Department will review the issue to assess initially what action should be taken. This may involve an informal review, an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation. Where it is decided that a formal investigation is necessary the overall responsibility for the investigation will lie with a nominated "investigation officer." The Department will advise you who is dealing with the matter, how he or she can be contacted, and whether your further assistance may be needed. If you request, the Department will write to you summarising your concern and setting out proposed handling arrangements. When you raise the concern you may be asked how you think the matter might best be resolved. If you do have any personal interest in the matter, we ask that you tell us at the outset.

2.3 We will give you as much feedback as we properly can, and if requested, we will confirm it in writing. However, we may not be able to tell you the precise action we take where this would infringe a duty of confidence owed by us to someone else.

### **3.0 CONFIDENTIALITY AND PROTECTION**

3.1 The Department will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone who raises a genuine concern and we hope that this assurance you enable you to raise your concern openly. However, we recognise that there may be circumstances where you would prefer to speak to someone in confidence first. If this is the case, please say so at the outset. If you ask us not to disclose your identity, we will not do so without your consent unless required by law. You should understand that there may be times when we are unable to resolve a concern without revealing your identity, for example where your personal evidence is essential. In such cases, we will discuss with you whether and how the matter can best proceed.